

Philadelphia  
AND THE  
Russian Famine  
OF  
1891 and 1892.

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Letters from Russia to the Philadelphia "Ledger,"  
"Times" and "Inquirer" by

RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG,

One of the Commissioners sent to make arrangements for the  
distribution of the gifts collected by

The Russian Famine Relief Committee  
of Philadelphia.

## PREFACE.

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At the request of numerous friends who took a deep interest in the movement to collect funds for the relief of the starving millions of Russia and the distribution of the same in that stricken land, I present the letters written from Russia in this form.

The chief object in preserving sketches of this eventful episode in the progress of civilization is to commemorate one of the grandest evidences of the growing sympathy of men and nations for the welfare of each other, showing that "A touch of nature makes the whole world akin."

The barriers are being removed that have prevented "Kindred nations mingling into one," a happy presage of the approach of that good time when the whole family of nations will be bound in a common brotherhood of man, the world over.

The generous spirit which prompted our people to respond so liberally to the appeal of the Russian Famine Relief Committee of Philadelphia, will never be forgotten by that distant country. In proof of this, let me quote from a letter I received from Count Woronzow Daschkow, Minister of the Imperial Court, who, in power and influence, perhaps, is next to the Czar of Russia himself:

"It is with great pleasure that I accept the photographs of the departure of your steamer *Indiana* from Philadelphia, and I thank you most heartily for them and your letter, in which you tell me of the kind interest you are all taking in us. The friendly feelings of sympathy America shows us now, when so many of our people are in want, can never be forgotten by me or my countrymen, and that you will believe this is the sincere wish of, dear sir,

Yours faithfully,

CT. WORONZOW DASCHKOW.

Then listen to the simple words of a peasant, a village elder in the Government of Samara, a man without education, but with a warm and thankful heart. As we left his village on a cold, wintry morning, he stood at the head of a delegation of villagers, their eyes filled with tears of gratitude, and exclaimed with trembling voice, "All we can say is, 'God bless you and those who sent you'."

R. B.

*Philadelphia, June, 1892.*

## PHILADELPHIANS IN RUSSIA.

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THE WARM WELCOME ACCORDED TO OUR RELIEF  
COMMITTEE.

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### MR. BLANKENBURG'S IMPRESSIONS.

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AFTER A HEARTY GREETING AT THE FRONTIER OUR TOWNSMEN  
MAKE THEIR FIRST JOURNEY ON A RUSSIAN RAILWAY—  
GLIMPSES OF THE PEOPLE IN PASSING—A DESOLATE AND  
MELANCHOLY WINTER LANDSCAPE—FROM WIRBALLEN TO  
ST. PETERSBURG.

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Special Correspondence of the *Times*.

ST. PETERSBURG, March 14, 1892.

"Wirballen, change cars!"

"Are you the American gentlemen?"

This pleasant greeting was addressed to us as we descended from the cars on our arrival at the Russian frontier by a Russian colonel and director of the district, who had been advised of our movements. Under his guidance we were, after surrendering our passports, at once permitted to pass the sentinels who guard the entrance door to the Custom Department, and without being in the least troubled by Custom House officers the iron bars to the inner rooms were raised as if by magic and we were on the holy soil of Russia. The examination of passports and baggage, as a rule, consumes much time, and those unfortunates in whose passports the least flaw is detected usually have to return to the German frontier and wait for rectification of errors from their home legation or from their Consuls in Germany. As the train leaves Wirballen about an hour and a half after arrival, passengers are often detained until they barely have time to get their dinners. The restaurant is excellent, and we were able to do

full justice to the meal that was set before us, and had ample time to digest the first impressions which the new life of this wonderful country made upon us.

Everything is in the Russian language. The higher officials speak French and German, a few English also, all the rest is as obscure to us as if we had never been to school. Sign-boards, bills of fare, tickets and newspapers are simply irritating; not a word has even the slightest semblance to any of the Western languages. We are quite at the mercy of—not the enemy, for no one could be more pleasantly treated than we were. The guards, porters and soldiers all assume their most captivating Russian smile and tip their caps as we pass them, for they are aware of the mission that takes us to their country, and the simple words “Philadelphia” and “steamer Indiana” open the hearts of these strange people to the strangers on their soil. They even refuse to take tips from us, shake their heads and utter a few words, Greek to us, yet plain enough in their meaning. They evidently want to do what little they have in their power to emulate the example of a generous people, and as they have no money to contribute they refuse to accept money. Human nature is everywhere alike. You strike the cord of sympathy wherever there is suffering and distress, and so the penny of the poor shines even more brightly than the dollar of the well-to-do.

At last the first bell rings, the colonel comes to us and gives each of us a warm shake of the hand, with a “bon voyage” and “God bless you.” We enter the cars and on we speed—no, not speed; that would be misrepresentation, for the journey from Berlin to St. Petersburg takes thirty-nine hours, a distance of 1,028 miles. Traveling in Russia is fully as comfortable or uncomfortable as in the rest of Europe. Their cars are wider and ride very easily. They are rarely crowded. Stations are few and far between, the restaurants are generally excellent, and as the Russians do not know what it is to be in a hurry ample time for meals is given.

The first impression one gets of Russia is that of vastness. The country at the frontier reminds one of some of our great prairie States, slightly rolling and without limit or boundary. The train, drawn by an engine larger than those in England or



Germany and fed with birch or pine wood, slowly winds its way through the snow-clad country, past human abodes that would seem strange and poor even to the earliest pioneers of our Western States. Low buildings, with straw roofs, no chimneys and one or two small windows are the characteristics of these villages and hamlets. Of the people we can as yet see and judge but little. It is cold and disagreeable and only those who are compelled are out of doors. Those we do see are hardly prepossessing. They are clad in sheepskin clothes, the skin inside, something like a fur cap on their heads, and enormous boots or footgear that is entirely unknown with us. The men mostly wear long beards and hair, and combs seem to be one of the luxuries that they indulge in only on great fête days. Quite a number of women act as guards at the railroad crossings. They do not seem to be as warmly dressed as the men, and are probably not considered of as high value. This is unfortunately the case even in the more civilized countries of Europe. Our American women do not appreciate what a blessing they enjoy, and how thankful they should be to call America their home. Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton would find a splendid field for their labors here; time will probably produce their prototypes sooner or later in this country.

I tried to study the faces of the lower classes of the people as we met them. So far I have been able to discover but one characteristic that seems to be the property of all, resignation and indifference. Their aspirations seem to be satisfied if they have a piece of black bread, a drink of home whiskey and a corner to sleep in. They look at the passing train in quiet amazement, hardly turn their heads and are out of our sight probably as quickly as we are out of their minds. A study of these people can, of course, better be made in the interior when we meet them face to face and visit them in their homes—what a perversion of a sacred name!

The stations and guard houses along the railroad are quite pleasing. They are frame buildings in the Swiss style as a general thing, well painted and look quite inviting. It strikes one rather strangely to see that the telegraph poles are all numbered from 1 to 100, and sometimes higher numbers, and the divisions alphabetically arranged. The idea is not a bad

one, as damages cannot be located or repairs made here as quickly as with us, and it is therefore important to find the place that needs looking after without hunting it up. A. D. Z. 100 can be more readily found than if the report comes that the wires are down  $12\frac{3}{4}$  versts south of Zzlamkisky.

The dividends of our railroads would be considerably reduced if they employed as many ornamental men as those in this country seem to need. At numerous stations, uniformed employes far outnumber the passengers—for what purpose is an enigma to people who are in the habit of helping themselves.

## BLANKENBURG IN ST. PETERSBURG.

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INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE TRAVELS OF THE  
PHILADELPHIANS.

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QUEER EXPERIENCES IN THE GREAT RUSSIAN  
METROPOLIS.

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ONE OF THE DISTRIBUTING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FAMINE  
RELIEF FUND WRITES, DESCRIBING THE ARRIVAL. HOTELS  
AND RAILROADS IN RUSSIA.

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Special Correspondence to *The Inquirer*.

ST. PETERSBURG, March 14.

Our train arrived at St. Petersburg without any display of speed above twenty miles an hour, promptly on schedule time. We had the pleasure of meeting the familiar face of Minister Smith at the station and received the warmest welcome at his hands. A sleigh and a carriage took us to the Hotel de l'Europe, where tired and travel-stained, we were glad to occupy the quarters reserved for us.

Traveling in Russia cannot be called a luxury, although it is equal to that of the rest of the continent. If Mr. Pullman would establish a branch of his great system in Russia he would deserve unstinted thanks from chance American travelers, though his stockholders might grumble, for dividends would be as rare as those of the Keely Motor Company have been and are likely to be. Trains are few and far between, and even the Berlin-St. Petersburg express has but one apology for a sleeping car, generally well patronized, but as it accommodates only a baker's dozen, and rarely has more applicants than accommodations, our American sleepers would hardly prove a paying investment even on this route. One of the unpleasant features is the scarcity of

water and towels. It was almost impossible during part of our journey to even wash our hands, so your readers can readily imagine how unwashed we looked and even worse than unwashed we felt.

How soon fatigue and trouble are forgotten when a pleasant atmosphere surrounds us ! It did not take us long to make ourselves presentable and to present ourselves at a table loaded with the good things of the land, a bottle of vodka occupying the place of honor. For fear of offending the sensibilities of our prohibition friends I abstain from translating the word "vodka." I will state, however, that it means something stronger than the prohibition beverage.

Hotels in Russia, at least in the large cities, are as good as any in Europe ; you can find accommodations to suit your taste and your purse ; a pleasant room can be had on the third floor for three rubles (a paper ruble at the present rate of gold is almost exactly the equivalent of fifty cents) ; you can eat at table d'hôte for about one dollar, and much cheaper at a good restaurant ; the inevitable candle and "service" must, of course, not be left out of the account.

Our apartments overlooked the famous Newsky. A hall, dining-room, parlor, three bed-rooms, bath-room, for twenty-three rubles a day does not seem extravagant in price. The beds are excellent, furniture good, but the combination of colors in carpet, furniture and curtains as a *tout-ensemble* would horrify any student of or believer in "harmony of colors." Some of the waiters speak English, all of them French and German ; we, therefore, have little trouble to get along. Were it otherwise how completely lost one would feel !

All our party have traveled to a considerable extent, but not until our arrival at St. Petersburg did we feel how utterly helpless we would be if we were left to the tender mercies of the natives, who could address us in Russian only, and we unable to answer in anything but the sign of the American dollar ! And to study Russian, even to master the ordinary conversation of the day ! We tried to make the attempt, but our hearts failed when we looked at the alphabet. Hercules himself could not have felt as disheartened when his famous tasks were asked of him as we did when we struck the letter III, pronounced



'schtscha" (if anyone but a Russian can pronounce it), and there are thirty-eight letters in the Russian alphabet, printed and written in characters that seem to be a mixture of Greek, Hebrew, Chaldaic and Crow-Indian, with an occasional glimpse of Roman letters.

It is not surprising that the Russians are perhaps the finest linguists in the world, especially in regard to the wonderful absence of any accent you find with them whether they speak French, German, English or Italian. Anyone who cannot twist his tongue as the Russians have to, must naturally find a relief in learning to speak languages without letters like "ishiza," "jatj," "jerj," etc.

It is a novel sight to walk or drive on the streets of St. Petersburg, unable to decipher or read a single sign on the stores, and to study the stores and places of business themselves, they are so different from those in other large cities of Europe or America, and this will probably not be changed until St. Petersburg becomes a great rendezvous of the traveling public of the world. At the present time visitors from America are very scarce and those from Western Europe rarely extend their visits so far north, or if they do, spend but little time here.

We learn that St. Petersburg contains about 10,000 English and about 100,000 Germans, which make quite a respectable proportion of the 1,000,000 inhabitants of the city. French and German are spoken in nearly all the larger shops, but if you try anything but Russian on the hack drivers you will not succeed in making them understand your wishes. We had an amusing incident of this kind last evening when our driver, who had been told to take us to the American Legation, either willfully or unknowingly forgot the street and number and drove us around town at his leisure until we compelled him by the use of loud, if not to him intelligible language, to take us back to the hotel and get his proper bearings.

A journey direct from Philadelphia to St. Petersburg is fatiguing to both body and mind. A good night's rest will probably restore us to our normal state and help us fulfill our mission to the satisfaction of those who sent us.

## STARVING RUSSIANS.

A LETTER BY RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG FROM  
ST. PETERSBURG,

IN WHICH ARE DETAILED THE MEASURES ADOPTED FOR THE  
DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD SENT BY AMERICA TO THE FAMINE  
STRICKEN DISTRICTS.

Special Correspondence of the *Public Ledger*.

ST. PETERSBURG, March 17.

When Charles Emory Smith, our most excellent Minister to Russia, returns to his native land, he will carry with him the high estimation and sincere regard of the Russian Government and people. No man could have done better and more acceptable service; he has been untiring in his efforts, judicious in his arrangements, and discerning in the final disposition of the magnificent gift of Philadelphia and other American communities. His name will long be remembered by the suffering millions of this country; members of the diplomatic corps may serve their country to the satisfaction of a part of those they represent; he gives eminent satisfaction to the whole of our nation as well as to the whole of Russia, from the Emperor down to the lowliest peasant. A striking illustration of the high appreciation of the man and his services, we are told by an eyewitness, was given at the last imperial reception; the Emperor conversed for a considerable time not only with our Minister, but also with the Secretary of the Legation and the Military Attache. This is almost unprecedented, and was the talk of other members of the Diplomatic Corps, for, as a general thing, the Emperor addresses a few words to the head of the Legation and simply bows to the others. While this act of courtesy may not seem extraordinary at home, it is quite a rare occurrence here.

To come to the practical work prepared by our Minister which was held in abeyance until our arrival and approval, I must introduce your readers to some of Mr. Smith's co-workers. After enjoying the hospitalities of his charming household, we met, by previous arrangement, four members of the private committee who have assisted Mr. Smith in his work. Mr. William Hilton, who is engaged in the oil business; Mr. John Blessig, the head of one of the largest grain houses; Mr. John Nobbs, engaged in the banking business, and Mr. Ernest Ropes, also a prominent business man. Mr. Smith was naturally asked the question whether these men were in every way qualified to assist and counsel in the great trust imposed upon us; his reply should satisfy even the most scrupulous of our friends in Philadelphia. He said: "I can recommend them as, under similar circumstances at home, I would recommend Edward C. Knight." As we knew that every member of the community would approve of Mr. Knight's selection for any trust, we felt satisfied.

It is but just to say here that much credit for the good work done is due to the Rev. Mr. Francis, Pastor of the Anglo-American Church of St. Petersburg. This church was founded about fifty years ago, and owes its existence, in a measure, to our then Minister, James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, who, after vain efforts on the part of the British Legation, succeeded in getting the permission to build this church from the Emperor Nicholas.

The Rev. Mr. Francis has been persistent in his labors; his correspondence with a multitude of people in the famine-stricken country would fill volumes, and twice he has visited the worst districts, exposing himself to all dangers from fatigue and contagion, until about a fortnight ago he was stricken with typhoid fever, and has since been confined to his bed. Fortunately the crisis has passed, and he is in a fair way of recovery.

After a general conversation with the Russian gentlemen we considered their proposed distribution of the cargo. It has been divided into 220 Russian carloads and apportioned to ten governments, as follows:

Tamboff Government, 53 carloads for 15 districts.

Ufa Government, 1 carload for 1 district.

Samara Government, 87 carloads for 4 districts,

Voronesh Government, 2 carloads for 1 district.  
Saratoff Government, 23 carloads for 4 districts.  
Rjasan Government, 18 carloads for 6 districts.  
Nijni Novgorod Government, 5 carloads for 2 districts.  
Orenburg Government, 7 carloads for 2 districts.  
Penza Government, 4 carloads for 2 districts.  
Tula Government, 20 carloads for 7 districts.

I give these details, as it may interest your readers to follow Philadelphia's gift on a map of Russia to its destination in the famine districts, and it will also give an idea of the extent of the territory affected.

The distribution of the cars with their precious freight is placed in the hands of carefully selected people in the various districts, all of them private individuals. Our American women will be especially gratified to learn that women in Russia have come forward and are as deeply interested in this grand work of charity as the men. Of the fifty-three cars for the Tamboff Government, for instance, thirty are assigned to women, among whom are members of the highest nobility, as well as those who, while not noble by birth, are noble of heart. It is also arranged that every barrel or sack of flour or other gifts shall be properly accounted for through receipts from those to whom they are given. These receipts will be collected in the various districts and transmitted to the central point, and forwarded to the St. Petersburg committee, who are thus enabled, and will be glad to give an account of their stewardship to the various American organizations who have entrusted to them the distribution of their donations.

The cars will be forwarded by the Russian Government, free of charge, to the nearest railroad station, and arrangements are perfected to have them leave there at once by wagon or sledge to their final point of destination. It must be remembered that the railroad net of Russia has very large meshes as yet, and it will take many years until they will approach us in the extent of mileage and perfection we enjoy; therefore horses, oxen and camels will have to be used to a large extent and for many miles, to penetrate with the welcome and eagerly looked-for gifts to the abodes of the sufferers.



It may strike some people as strange why eighty-seven car loads, or nearly one-third of the cargo, should go to one Government, and only four districts in that Government—Samara. We learn from eye-witnesses that the distress there is more pronounced and terrible than anywhere else. The whole cargo could have been sent there, and they would soon need more. This is especially true of the southern part of the district, where there are no railroads, and communication is very difficult. The committee for this section consists of Count Bobrinsky, Baroness Engelhardt, Count Tolstoï, Mr. I. Besant and others. This section is one of those which we propose to visit, as it is said to more fully represent every phase of distress than any other. The Government of Samara is one-third larger than the State of Pennsylvania, and in 1888, had 2,264,000 inhabitants, of whom 1,368,000 are absolutely destitute. How the people of that district appreciate even a small gift can best be seen from two letters, which I translate. The simple words, in their pathetic language of thanks for the little help given, and the hope that they may not be forsaken in their hour of need, must appeal to the hearts of all mankind!

[LETTER NO. 1.]

SAMARA, East of River Volga, 1892, the year of God, February 13th.—We, whose names are signed to this letter, hereby acknowledge, with our signatures, that we have received through Mr. Alexander Andrejewitsch Feidel five poods (equal to 180 pounds) flour and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  poods (90 pounds) oatmeal for the famine sufferers of Marienburg. This is a great help to us in our terrible distress, and may God Almighty bless all our benefactors a thousand-fold, and may He take pity on us and send us further help and save us from starvation.

Accept our heartfelt thanks for your donation.

HEINRICH CARL JACOB KATZENBORN,  
HEINRICH KATZENDORN,  
ANGPSEACK TEPUCK,

Village Elders.

[LETTER NO. 2.]

1892, February 11th.—We, whose names are signed hereunto, landowners of the village Manheim, district of Oberkaraman,

herewith testify that we have received, through Mr. Alexander Andrejewitsch Feidel, 10 poods (360 pounds) flour and 5 poods (180 pounds) oatmeal for our famine sufferers. This is great and welcome help in our dire distress. May God bless all our benefactors a thousandfold, and may He have mercy upon us and send us further assistance to save us from the horrors of starvation, the most fearful death man can know.

HEINRICH HAERTER,  
V. WINDERHOLLERN,  
TH. RUNREN,  
WEINMANN,  
Village Elders.

Think of it, you who have plenty, this hearty effusion of thanks for a few hundred pounds of flour for the use of the inhabitants of a whole village, who are suffering the pangs of hunger, and remember that, as the season advances, distress and famine must increase, for provisions and all means of sustenance grow less and less every day, and unless help shall continue to be given, the evening of the nineteenth century of our Christian era may be shamed by the fact that we, who have plenty, have permitted our fellows to perish from hunger!

## SCENES AT WASHINGTON AVENUE WHARF ON FEBRUARY 22 DUPLI- CATED AT LIBAU.

### BLANKENBURG DESCRIBES THE INDIANA'S ARRIVAL.

#### A ROYAL RECEPTION IN WHICH THE GRATITUDE OF THE RUS- SIANS WAS THE MOST CONSPICUOUS FEATURE.

Special Correspondence of *The Inquirer*.

ST. PETERSBURG, March 19.

It may interest your readers to learn how the press of St. Petersburg reported the arrival of the *Indiana*, the discharge of her cargo and the popular ovation given to the captain, officers and crew of the relief ship. The space given to this event is something hardly ever known here. Great state affairs could not have been treated with more minute description, and the interesting affair is discussed among all classes with much animation.

These extracts I translate from the French and German papers of St. Petersburg. The Russian papers have, as I learn, even longer reports, but for obvious reasons their translation must be submitted to some one who is familiar with the Russian language. If you wish it a Russian paper shall reach you by the first mail, to be translated into English by your Russian linguist. Every first-class paper naturally has some official on its staff who speaks every language known on the globe, and you certainly are not the exception.

Here are some extracts :

MARCH 17.—At last, after a long and stormy passage, the guest from the far West, who has been expected by our people with impatience, has arrived. About noon yesterday the light-

house announced that the Indiana was in sight and by 2 o'clock a vast throng had assembled at the wharf, ready to give hearty greeting to the welcome visitor. Soon after half-past 3 the Russian steamer Strash started with a distinguished company on board, comprising the leading officials of Libau, the officers of the Wend Reserve Battalion, representatives of the city of St. Petersburg, members of the press and other dignitaries, among whom was prominent the American Consul General Dr. Crawford, and last, but not least, the military band of Libau.

The Strash was closely followed by the steamers Concordia and Lootsmann, densely crowded with people. The sea was calm, and after about twenty minutes we saw the mighty stranger. Eleven times the guns of the Strash thundered an eager welcome to the American steamer, the flags waved fraternal greeting from the masts of all the boats, hearty welcome and spirited congratulations were exchanged as the three Russian boats approached the Indiana. When they reached the latter the scene was indescribable. Such cheers were never before heard. The waving of hats and handkerchiefs, the sparkling eyes, and scarcely repressed emotion formed a scene never to be forgotten, and all eyes were enthusiastically turned to the Stars and Stripes, which proudly floated from the mast of the Strash.

There lay the colossal boat, the messenger of love from the distant land, loaded down to the utmost with the gifts that are to preserve life. There securely anchored, not rolling and pitching in a stormy sea, but proudly facing another enemy whom she had come to assist in conquering—the dreadful famine. Slowly the Strash steamed in a wide circle around the giant from Philadelphia, under the strains of the American national hymn—for had not the American ship departed under the strains of the Russian national hymn? Then she stopped and the Indiana was boarded.

There they stood on board of the welcome guest—Captain Sargent, First Mate Rogers and the rest of the officers. They offered their bronzed hands with warm greeting, and their animated and sympathetic faces spoke volumes. The captain, of medium height, heavy build, apparently in the full vigor of manhood, led his visitors to his cabin and there we drank to the safe arrival and safe return of the steamer a glass of foaming



wine. Our conversation was in good English, in poor English, also in no English at all, but what tongue could not tell was expressed by glances, gestures and sighs, and though many thoughts had to remain slumbering in our minds, one thing seemed to possess all of us, and that was the fact that we had on board of the Indiana the best of friends, whose reception could not be celebrated in too cordial a manner.

About 4 o'clock we again boarded the Strash, accompanied by Captain Sargent and another officer.

Captain Sargent had hardly set foot on our boat when the enthusiastic people literally took possession of him and carried him on their shoulders high up in the air. This treatment seemed a novelty to our Western guests, who at first looked rather surprised, but they soon understood this sign language and submitted with the best possible grace. Then we proceeded with music and cheers on our return to the harbor, to be received at the wharf by an immense crowd of people, all cheering and shouting their hearty welcome.

Almost as soon as the Strash reached the Indiana we saw the lighters approach to help unload the precious freight from Philadelphia, for she has to leave our port within a few days. They commenced work at once and continued throughout the night, the electric lights of the steamer making this possible. Early this morning the first lighters came into port, and the freight was at once transferred to the waiting train of cars, the locomotive gaily decorated with the American and Russian flags.

A special officer of the railroad company watches the loading, and everything is done to hasten the departure of the trains toward the famine districts. Each car is marked in large letters, "Committee of the Imperial Crown Prince. Special train. Give right of way!" (The Crown Prince is chairman of the Russian Relief Committee.)

MARCH 18.—The first train of flour and provisions from the cargo of the Indiana, composed of 27 cars, leaves to-day for the provinces affected by the famine. The locomotive is profusely decorated with the American and Russian flags. The cars were loaded in the presence of the Mayor, the Consul-General of the United States, Count Bobrinsky and Mr. Adadourow, chief of the

railway service of Libau, and other distinguished persons. Seven steamers, having on board 2000 operatives of the harbor, have gone to the steamer Indiana to pay their respects. The last seven sacks of flour of the cargo of the Indiana were unloaded by the Mayor, Count Bobrinsky, Captain Sargeant, Consul General Crawford, Mr. Adadourow, president of the railroad, Captain Droydow and Dr. Dolan, of the Indiana. Toasts were proposed to the health of His Majesty the Emperor, and of President Harrison. These toasts were accompanied by the Russian and American national hymns, and the locomotive was decorated with the flags of the two countries.

MARCH 19.—The "Indiana," towed by two tugs, has entered the port of Libau amidst the wildest demonstrations and enthusiasm of the whole populace, headed by the authorities. As soon as she was made fast she was boarded by a multitude of people, and a "Te Deum" was celebrated after the rites of the Greek orthodox Church.

The "Indiana" is to leave for home on Sunday afternoon. Her mission of mercy has been fulfilled. The grateful hearts of the famine sufferers and of the whole Russian people wish her "God-speed." "We shall never forget her nor those who sent her to us in our hour of distress."

This is the tone of the Russian press, and as the translation is rather literal, the deep feeling that prevails in the original articles cannot be reproduced. Thus your readers do not get an adequate idea how highly Philadelphia's gift is appreciated.

One of the remarkable phases of the "Indiana's" experience is that she was unloaded within two days, as the Russians are proverbial for their slowness. A Russian is never in a hurry, at least in ordinary life. If you go to the banker's to draw money you are fortunate to get it inside of an hour. Your letter of credit passes through numerous hands. A little chat with a friend on the part of the clerk while you wait is considered perfectly proper. Cigars and cigarettes are more important than you are (for many of the employes smoke in the office), and if you have the assurance to say that you are in a hurry they shrug their shoulders and look at you in utter amazement. It must therefore be acknowledged as a wonderful feat to unload 2100 tons of freight by lighters in less than forty-eight hours. This

is due, however, mainly to the energy and tact of Mr. Bornholdt who is a large ship owner of both Libau and Riga, and also American Consul at these places. He seems to have the Western push and activity that are necessary on such occasions, and besides hurrying and perfecting all arrangements, I believe Mr. Bornholdt bears himself the largest share, if not all the expense of unloading the "Indiana," which must amount to several thousand dollars:

The stevedores at Libau, like those in Philadelphia, worked without intermission and with greatest cheerfulness until the steamer was unloaded. In fact everybody who can in the least assist in this admirable work seems to be eager to contribute his mite.

## STARVING RUSSIANS.

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ANOTHER LETTER BY RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG  
FROM ST. PETERSBURG.

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A STRONG REVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN THE FAMINE-STRICKEN  
DISTRICTS AND THE CAUSES WHICH HAVE LED TO THE  
DISTRESS.

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Special Correspondence of the *Public Ledger*.

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ST. PETERSBURG, March 21.

The question how to apportion the Indiana's cargo not only to the different Governments (we might compare them to our States, as many of them are as large and larger than Pennsylvania), but especially to the various districts in these Governments, seemed of gravest importance. Upon the proper distribution at its ultimate destination depended the success or failure of Philadelphia's gift. Some districts are less affected than others; the number of people varies in each district; public works, such as the building of railroads, the clearing of forests, etc., have been started in a few by the Government to give employment to at least part of the able-bodied men, who are thus enabled to earn a little money and can sustain themselves. All these things had to be considered. The committee had been in correspondence with reliable parties in every direction to ascertain the number of those actually starving, and it resulted in the apportionment being made as stated in my previous letter. This decision we arrived at with a view to the even distribution of the flour by giving the same quantity to each person. Only thus could quarrels, envy and jealousy be avoided. The finer qualities of human nature are put to a severe test among the sufferers. Self preservation seems to be the first law of nature, although we hear of many touching cases where the poor are helping the



poor, even to sharing the last crust of bread. The average quantity of flour to each person is about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  pounds. This amount of flour will bake perhaps 11 pounds of bread, and, as human life, according to Russian experts, can for four months be saved on a half pound of bread daily, the recipients of the flour can sustain life for 22 days on the quantity allotted to each of them by our committee. This leads to quite an interesting calculation of how much good the cargo of the "Indiana" will do. Taking into account the fact that the Russian Government has appropriated 150,000,000 roubles, or \$75,000,000, of which 125,000,000 roubles have already been expended—the further fact that the Emperor himself, from his private fortune (he is immensely rich), has contributed *scores* of millions of roubles—the cargo of the "Indiana" seems like a drop in a bucket. Yet the flour alone, nearly 5,000,000 pounds, will make 7,500,000 pounds of bread, and thus sustain the lives of 15,000,000 people for one day, or 1,500,000 for 10 days, or 150,000 for 100 days; and finally, to make even a stronger comparison, the cargo of the "Indiana" would, for more than one year, sustain the lives of every man, woman and child in the city of Harrisburg. The "Missouri," eagerly expected by the community with her larger cargo, the "Conemaugh" with Philadelphia's second contribution, will be welcome help, and, if America but knew the extent of the famine, dozens of ship-loads would be forwarded, each of them a messenger of sweet charity and good will.

In this connection a short resumé of the extent of the famine, as far as it is known, may not be out of place. The Governments affected are 17 in number, and extend from Tula, south of Moscow, to the east, far beyond the river Volga, and from the southern Government of Samara as far north as Wjatka. The number of people in these "provinces" is estimated at from 27,000,000 to 30,000,000, of whom there are absolutely destitute and in dire distress about 24,000,000. Government help is extended with rather queer discrimination to our way of thinking. Take, for instance, the Government of Samara. It was peopled, according to the census of 1888, by 2,264,384 inhabitants, of whom 1,368,000 are destitute. Of these 964,000 are in receipt of partial relief through the Government, but as the Government absolutely excludes from relief all laborers *and children*

*under two years of age*, there are over 400,000 people in this *one* district who are left to their own resources and who would perish from starvation were it not for private aid extended to them. Why the Government should exclude children under two years from participating in relief extended to others passes *our* comprehension. The only explanation we have been able to gather is that their mothers can nourish them, but how half-starved mothers, many of them sick with the prevalent diseases, can give nourishment to these children is a mystery to us.

The aid extended from private sources is put to the very best uses. What would become of these people were it not for the English quakers, who are doing admirable work and who have already expended about \$100,000, the private committee working with the British-American Church, the American contributions in money and kind, had better not even be contemplated. Good work is also being done by the Russian committee, of which the Imperial Crown Prince is the head. They have collected a large amount of money and are distributing it with much wisdom. It is interesting to note that the highest classes of Russian society are taking up this work of relief with great enthusiasm. The nobility is doing admirably, and it is not only confined to the men of rank; the women old and young, married and single, are vying with each other in their efforts to help their stricken country.

Many young women of this class are at the head of the soup kitchens in the interior. They are laboring day and night, not as ornamental figure heads, but they lead in the work and set a good example that is thus more eagerly followed by those under them. The taste of practical and useful employment that many of these people of high rank and birth perhaps now for the first time enjoy may be of immense value to them and their country in the future. Many men and women do not know what they are capable of doing. If they once start in the right direction they will follow it, and, instead of leading lives of uselessness and indolence, bound only to seek the pleasure of this world, they may learn that there are higher aims in life, and that to "love thy neighbor as thyself" gives more satisfaction than not to know that we have any neighbors at all.

In strange contrast to the interest taken by the upper ten is the apparent indifference of the well-to-do middle classes. It would seem almost impossible to form a committee of citizens in St. Petersburg similar to the one formed in Philadelphia for the relief of the famine-stricken peasants in Russia. This class of citizens here do not seem to have any cohesive power at all ; they do not show any public spirit whatever, and the very idea of organizing for the purpose indicated would probably strike them as almost revolutionary and absolutely opposed to the traditions of their class and their kind. This can partly be explained through the fact that their Government is entirely different from our own and that the majority of them have neither taste nor inclination for a change.

Most excellent work has been and is being done by Count Tolstoi, than whom, perhaps, no Russian is better known in America. He has devoted his whole time, assisted by his family, to this charity, goes backward and forward from place to place, and gives his personal attention in every direction. He has been assisted by money contributions directly placed in his hands from America, England and other countries, and I hope to have the pleasure of meeting him in the famine districts next week. His observations and experience are invaluable for the collection of famine statistics, and his work in the cause of humanity is simply sublime.

The rumor that Count Tolstoi has been antagonized and even threatened by the Russian Government for the manner and methods of his work can be traced to the same source that invariably tries to belittle, misrepresent and even falsify everything pertaining to Russia. There is an antagonism to Russia and her Government in Germany, as well as in England, that seeks in every way to propagate falsehood and to cloud the truth, and, as most of our information from and about Russia is gathered from English and German sources, it would be well for us to discount largely the wonderful stories we hear from and about this land. When I arrived in Europe the story was flashed all over the civilized world that Count Tolstoi had been ordered to his estates by the Government and that he was a prisoner! I read editorials on this "high-handed outrage" in some of the leading papers of Europe, and must confess the

news struck me very unfavorably and prejudiced me a good deal. Almost the first question I asked upon my arrival was regarding the truth of this story, and the reply received from a high and well-posted source was: "There is absolutely no truth in it." My informant added that the Count did give the Government concern occasionally on account of his peculiar notions about many things, but this story about his arrest and imprisonment was not true. Count Tolstoi is at present, as stated in yesterday's *St. Petersburg Gazette*, not on his estate, "Iassnaja Poljana," in the Government of Rjasan, but in the Busuluk district of Samara, 500 miles east of his home. It would really be well not to be in a hurry to accept as authentic all the news we receive about Russia through the channels above indicated. The ill feeling of these countries towards Russia prejudices them to the extent that they magnify the dark sides and scarcely mention the bright ones.

Many things I have said in this letter are digressing from the title at the head of it, but have an indirect bearing on the great subject that engrosses our attention, and may, therefore, be pardoned.

One of the phases of the calamity in Russia has hardly received the attention it deserves—that is, the preservation of horses and cattle. What are the farmers to do if they lose their stock? How are they to prepare for next season's crop? And if another season should prove a failure! I shudder at the thought!

This was very impressively placed before us at the first meeting held at Minister Smith's house, on the day of our arrival. Mr. John Blessig, the gentleman mentioned in my previous letter, had the day before returned from an extended trip through Samara, on the left bank of the river Volga. He had travelled 650 versts (1508 versts equal 1000 English miles) in sledges into the interior of the government, established a number of soup kitchen and gathered much valuable information. From him we learned that in many places fodder for cattle was even scarcer than bread for the people, and that the farmers were in utter despair lest they should lose their only means of sustenance for the future. It seems that the farmers thereabouts live in colonies, and that their farms are often from 50 to 100 versts



distant from their villages. They go in April, 20 to 30 together with their horses and ploughs and seeds, and attend to farming, and after this is finished return home, and do not go back until the grain is ready to harvest. What the loss of their horses or oxen means to these people can be readily imagined. The hay crop also had been an absolute failure, and instead of being able to buy hay at 4 or 5 roubles a ton, the price was 12 roubles in the more favored regions, and as high as 30 roubles in the distant parts. Help had to come quickly, so, after consultation with Minister Smith, we decided, instead of buying 40 Russian car loads of flour, as was our original intention, to appropriate the money for the purchase of hay and straw, for this help had to come at once, or it would be too late. If horses and cattle can be kept from now until the forepart of May they will be safe, as the pastures generally are ready for them by that time, while the next harvest will not bring relief to the people until July or August—if they have a harvest. We trust our action will meet the approval of our friends at home. The cargoes of the Missouri and Conemaugh will be in time for the starving people, but to save the cattle required immediate action; thus the distribution of funds which we thought wisest will probably bring relief not only now, but may prevent a recurrence of famine in these districts for next fall.

It appears that the last good crop of the Samara and other districts was gathered in 1886. Ever since that time adversity seems to have followed the tillers of the soil. A partial failure in 1887 and 1888 was followed by even greater failures in 1889 and 1890, until in 1891 there was almost, if not quite, a season that closely resembles the seven poor years we read of in the Bible. While the average crop of wheat in 1886 amounted to 20 bushels an acre (86 poods to the dessyatin, or two and a half acres), the crop of 1891 was from quite nothing up to 10 and as high as 36 pounds a dessyatin, or from *one bushel to 15 acres* up to perhaps four bushels to 15 acres. This in itself was enough to appal the stoutest heart, but add to it the actual failure of the hay and straw crops, and the situation of our sufferers is before you. The hay crop was promising until May, when the hot sun and the hot winds from Asia dried up and parched everything until it was so hot that "you could bake an apple in the sun," as a priest expressed himself.

## STARVATION ON THE VOLGA.

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RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG TELLS ABOUT HIS TRAVELS  
IN RUSSIA.

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### WRETCHEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE.

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IN THE FAMINE DISTRICT THE PEASANTS HAVE USED THE STRAW  
WITH WHICH THEIR HOUSES WERE THATCHED FOR FUEL  
AND FOR FEED FOR THEIR CATTLE—NOT ONLY HUMAN  
BEINGS ARE AND HAVE BEEN SUFFERING FOR THE WANT OF  
FOOD AND FUEL, BUT THE ANIMALS HAVE ALSO BEEN ON  
SHORT RATIONS FOR MANY MONTHS.

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Special Correspondence of *The Times*.

SARATOW, March 24.

Our mission to St. Petersburg is ended, all arrangements for the distribution of the cargo of the *Indiana* are complete, a number of special trains are now on the way to their destination to bring help and cheer to the poverty-stricken peasants of Russia, who have enlisted the sympathy of America. The gift of our people is appreciated by high and low, the debt of gratitude which we owe to the Russian Government for their indirect aid in the dark days of our civil war finds expression in the aid we now give them to lighten the burden that has so appallingly come to them in the dark days of famine and distress.

A few parting visits are made, one to our Consul General, Dr. Crawford, who, we learn, has just returned from Libau. Charles Emory Smith accompanies us to his residence where, after an introduction, we learn the details of the splendid reception accorded the *Indiana*. Your readers, undoubtedly, have heard the story of this, the most magnificent ovation ever given in Russia to a foreign vessel. It was unique in every way and will long be remembered by those who had the pleasure of

participating in it. One of the features of this celebration which gives us especial delight is the part taken in it by my fellow-commissioners, Colonel Drexel and Dr. Biddle, who in eloquent language spoke at the banquet of the part Philadelphia and her people had taken when the first call for help was heard. Their addresses were received with vociferous cheers and that the friendly feeling between the two countries, so far apart in many ways and yet so near in others, may endure for all time seemed to be the prevailing sentiment of all those who were present.

A late dinner—late, as usual, for everything is late almost to distraction—making us nearly miss the only train that daily leaves for Moscow, and Saratow towards the famine district of Samara, and off we are. Kindly friends go with us to the station to help us buy tickets, check our baggage and secure our sleeper. How we would have got along without them we do not know—nothing but Russian, not a word of French or German, an experience not at all pleasant to people who have the good fortune to generally understand what is going on around them. We are at last settled in our comfortable, but very expensive, sleeping car. A half dozen different bells, signals and signs are given and the train starts.

This is the best train in all Russia. It leaves Petersburg daily at 8 p. m. for Moscow, the cars are commodious and clean, the sleeper arranged in sections for either two or four. We could only get a compartment for four, therefore we had to pay ten rubles apiece for a night's rest, but as this included towels it could hardly be considered out of the way. It may not be generally known that travelers in Russia are expected to furnish their own towels, even in some of the hotels. Those who are initiated in this usage would as soon forget their hats or caps as to be found without this indispensable article. A Russian never travels without a towel and a pillow if he goes any distance. It is quite amusing to see them lug with the rest of their baggage a large square down pillow. It is needed, however, as the cars, especially second and third class, have no place that can be used as a head rest, so the traveler has to provide his own comfort as best he can.

This, the fastest train in Russia, goes at the rate of twenty-nine miles an hour. It takes fourteen hours to make the

distance from Petersburg to Moscow, 609 versts; a slow passenger train takes twenty-three hours, or crawls at the rate of about eighteen miles an hour. It would make the people hereabouts dizzy to see the Chicago Limited Express on the Pennsylvania Railroad, or the Royal Blue Line on the Reading Railroad annihilate distance. Many would hesitate to entrust their lives to these trains.

As the morning dawns we get the first glimpses of the landscape between the two great capitals of the country. The land is flat, uninteresting, almost distressing in its monotonous character; we pass through birch and pine woods from time to time, see wretched looking villages with fine church buildings, antique wind mills, a few large factories in the towns; this scene repeats itself all the way to Moscow. Of the natives a photographic picture alone could give a true idea. The peasants, who are assembled at the stations, are a study. They are dressed in sheepskin coats that reach about to the knee, fur caps, and many of them in the most wonderfully complex footgear. A kind of shoe with wood or leather soles and birch bark uppers, closely woven, and tied to their limbs with rags of all colors and combinations. We learn that they never wear underclothes even during the hardest winters, they rely upon their sheep skins to keep them warm and hardly take them off from the time winter sets in until the last signs of snow are gone in the spring. To be in close proximity to these people is anything but pleasant and how human beings can live in the atmosphere that a dozen or less of them create, seems a marvel. Their faces are a study, lack of intelligence is depicted in every feature; they stare at the passing train, do not seem to have a word to say to one another and are on the whole perhaps the most indifferent and stupid looking people I have ever seen.

Stupid! How can they be otherwise? Schools are few and far between; there is no system of education whatever. The little some of them learn comes to them more by chance. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that but eight to eleven per cent. of all Russians can read and write? Eight per cent. is the lowest, eleven per cent. the highest estimate of those who have even a foundation of knowledge. Will this ever be remedied is a question no one can answer. It will certainly remain as it is until



the government steps in with an iron hand and compels a change. It is a reflection on morals and religion that the Church has not taken steps to elevate the poor, ignorant and superstitious masses, at least to give them even the semblance of civilization.

It seems that the Russian Church has for its foundation stone wretchedness, ignorance and superstition; that to remove them would be to endanger the great influence and absolute control which the priests now wield. We see an object lesson of this statement on every side; look at the villages with their miserable huts, abodes not fit for even cattle to live in; their dirty streets, wretchedness unspeakable, and then behold—the magnificent church building that rears its proud steeples and fine cupolas in the midst of squalor and want. The cost of all the huts and abodes in many of these villages—and almost every one has a church—cannot nearly approximate the cost of the church building alone! If the priests would devote but one-half of their labors to the furtherance of the things of this world and the other half to that of the world to come, they would confer an inestimable blessing on their people, though they might lose some of the power they now wield. Better yet, make schoolmasters of nine out of ten priests, or if they are not willing to change their vocation send enlightened schoolmasters abroad, separate church and state and a wonderful change will soon be wrought.

An intelligent Russian, who, as most of the intelligent ones do, spoke French, told me that the wealth of the Russian Church is almost incalculable; that it could pay the Russian national debt (some \$3,500,000,000) and would then be enormously wealthy. Yet this same church has hardly been heard of during the great distress prevalent in so many provinces; no soup kitchens have been opened by it; no contributions given. It seems bent only upon saving souls for the world to come and upon laying up for itself the riches of this world.

We stop but two hours at Moscow, the picturesque city, are met at the station by some friends who attend to our transfer from train to train, and on we speed, or rather crawl, towards Tambow and Saratow. Not many miles from Moscow the first signs of distress and famine are seen. The few idlers who congregate at the station look hungry and weary, with sunken

checks, hollow eyes, and in the villages we pass many roofs are uncovered. The peasants have used the straw that serves as a cover, for fuel and feed for their cattle. Not only human beings are and have been suffering for want of food and fuel, but the animals, horses and cattle have been on short rations for many months. Large numbers have starved to death, for the straw and hay crops have been failures also. The further southeast we go the greater distress seems to grow, and by the time we reach Saratow, on the river Volga, we have a fair idea of what will meet our eyes when we get into the province of Samara.

Railroad accommodations also get poorer, fine cars from St. Petersburg to Moscow, fairly good ones to Koslow, poor and dilapidated ones to Saratow. In keeping with this are the stations and restaurants. Hungry people, however, are not so very particular, and as we get hungry like the rest of mankind we shut our eyes and eat—what we can get! It is not an easy matter to ask for what you want where not a soul seems to know a word but Russian, and it is therefore absolutely necessary to have a book which gives the names of things you desire to buy. We are provided with one of these books, and with it and the sign language have got along fairly well until we want to enlarge our bill of fare. After careful study we collect enough words to order a reasonable repast, and at the station, Rtshevo, we boldly enter the restaurant, and in purest Russian order "tschaj," tea, "chljebb," bread, "jaitzo," egg, "schtschuka," fish. The waiter looks amazed, while we recover from the effort of pronouncing these "kindergarten" words; then he asks us in French, "What is it you desire?" If ever mortals were disappointed at seeing their linguistic efforts thwarted, we were those mortals, though our disappointment brought us a better meal than we would otherwise have been able to obtain.

We had left the Neva at 8 o'clock at night and at last, after forty-five hours of wearisome travel, we reached the city of Saratow on the west bank of the Volga.

## DOWN THE VOLGA.

COMMISSIONER BLANKENBURG'S EXPERIENCE GRAPHICALLY TOLD.

### NARRATIVES OF THE FAMINE.

THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE AS SEEN ON ALL SIDES, WITH INCIDENTS WHICH TELL PLAINLY OF THE GREAT SUFFERINGS NOW BEING IN A MEASURE ALLEVIATED BY CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

Special Correspondence of *The Inquirer*.

SARATOW, March 28.

Saratow, a town of some 125,000 inhabitants, is the terminal of the railroad from Moscow, an important shipping point, with large flouring mills, grain trade, dirty, ill-paved streets, and the usual variety of people one finds in all Russian towns, from the quite rich down to those whom even the shrewdest "Armenian" could not rob.

The substantial middle classes, with their broad and progressive ideas, one finds in all our American cities, are rarely met with here. This probably accounts in a large measure for the ignorance, shiftlessness and inexplicable indifference to their fate that is depicted on the faces of the low and lowest classes. The rich are indifferent to the lot of their poor fellows; the powerful know that such power as they wield can be maintained only by keeping the masses as near down to the brute as they dare. How many years or even centuries it will take to bring about a change is an insolvable riddle.

We are met at the station in Saratow by the Miller Brothers, very intelligent and pleasant men, who represent the St. Petersburg Committee in this district, and by them taken to the "Hotel



Russian," where even the "portier" speaks nothing but his native tongue. It is quite late in the evening, hunger must be appeased and arrangements made for an early start in the morning, for the weather has changed, the strong frost has given away to his milder brother; the Volga may break up, and woe to him who is on the other side, for there is no way whatever of crossing over to the right bank until after the drift has passed, a matter of some three or four weeks, perhaps.

Besides these preparations, we have been urged to pay a visit to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Saratow, Antonius Zerr, whose diocese is probably one of the largest, if not the largest, in the world, comprising as it does the whole eastern part of Russia, including Asiatic Siberia. We find him a decidedly intelligent man, of fine presence, some 40 years of age, deeply interested in the great work of relief that enlists the sympathy of the civilized world. He is also an example of the self-made man, who is bound to come to the surface even under the most adverse circumstances.

Born in the country, of poor parents, the gifts with which he has been endowed raised him step by step until he has reached his exalted position. From him we learn much, most, alas! of a distressing character, giving us a deep insight into the cause of the famine, the critical position of the half-starved people, and, in a way, preparing us for the sad sights that are to meet our eyes.

The Bishop speaks English quite well. It would have been of much use to him were he able to carry out his intention of visiting the great exposition at Chicago next year—but the famine has come, all the available funds, even his scanty savings have gone to appease hunger and to comfort the sick. His visit will have to be deferred until a more propitious time. How pleasant it is to learn from him that the churches have worked together in harmony all over the regions where distress prevails—among these Catholics and Lutherans alike. This is one of the bright spots of a dark picture.

We are to make an early start, as the distance to be traversed is nearly sixty miles, so we are called at 6 A. M., just about the time our friends at home are preparing to go to sleep. A strange looking vehicle is at the door. It looks like a large basket on runners, commodious enough to comfortably seat three in the one



back seat, and just large enough front to hold the driver ; strongly built all over and so arranged that it can hardly upset, an absolute necessity to our safety, as we were soon to ascertain. This sleigh was specially built for the two English Friends who have done, and are doing, such splendid work for the sufferers. They used it on their trip through Samara, and sold it when they returned. Three horses are hitched to our sleigh—one in the shafts and one on each side, the middle one a little larger than the others, trained to trot, while the other two are trained to gallop. These horses are not much for looks, but for endurance and swiftness they cannot be excelled. Our provisions are packed with careful attention. It may be all we can get on the four days' journey. We are provided with warm fur coats, and off we go in a blinding snow storm.

The town is soon behind us. We reach the Volga in expectation of a fine sleigh ride on a smooth surface of ice. What a disappointment ! A rougher ride cannot be imagined. The masses of snow that had commenced falling in October have drifted in all directions, up and down, forming regular ditches and snow banks, worse than a freshly ploughed field, but all this was not considered an impediment. Our driver was used to it and we—well, we tried to keep our seats, and to look as if we enjoyed it.

On we went on the beaten track, and off when other conveyances met us, the horses going at fullest speed, the driver talking to them in unspeakable terms, mud, snow, and ice splashing in all directions.

The weather cleared up, we were enabled to see and take note of the scenes around us—a picture unique and full of interest. The Volga is, during the winter as well as in summer, the great highway of communication between the East and West, the North and South, full of life and animation, a constantly changing panorama. You meet hundreds and hundreds of sleighs going in all directions, some laden with pleasure seekers, others on business bent, the great majority though of the poorer class, pulled by scrawney, lean horses ; many drawn by men or women, who wade through the snow, hauling in a sledge a few pounds of flour to feed the mouths of those at home.

We met a man with quite a load of willow baskets, perhaps two hundred, baskets similar in size and style to those our Jersey truck farmers use. How much will he get for those baskets? we ask of Mr. Miller, the friend who accompanies us on our journey. From two to three kopeks apiece (one cent to one and a half cents apiece). Think of it! A whole load of baskets hauled forty miles and the return? The whole load may yield perhaps three dollars! The man who buys of him in Saratow retails them at 18 to 20 kopeks (9 to 10 cents) apiece. This seems hardly just.

We met another man, poorly clad, his horse, looking even more hungry than himself, goes with effort. The man has the appearance of one being half dead with consumption. His load consists of perhaps a dozen rakes, spades, hoes and other small farming utensils, including one plow. Where is he going? To Saratow to sell these things for maybe a rouble and a half to buy bread for his starving family. Then when spring comes round he goes to the purchaser of the goods to buy them back, paying six or even tenfold for them!

This is the information we get as we pass sleigh after sleigh or people who make their way to town afoot. There comes a woman who carries a large basket on her back. What has she? She braids straw—quite an industry on the Volga—straw that is used to make the hats we wear in summer time to keep the hot sun from us. Do we ever give a thought to the persons who weave the braid in these hats? If we did we would not feel so comfortable under their protecting cover.

Look at this woman! She travels on foot, through snow and slush, a distance of eighteen miles to take to the dealers a package of braided straw. Hear her story: "I work from four in the morning until ten at night—eighteen hours of constant labor. During this time I can braid, as an expert braider, twenty fathoms of straw, or 140 feet. The price paid for this quantity is nine kopeks, or four and one-half cents. Many braiders cannot do more than ten or fifteen fathoms in twenty-four hours, reducing their earnings to two or three cents daily." There she marches, the load on her back, calculating probably in her mind how much flour she can buy from the proceeds of her labor for the children at home!!

On the river we see a fisherman. He has cut holes in the ice and sunk his nets to catch fish for the Saratow market. He pulls a primitive hand sledge along with him to receive the results of his labor. How much does he earn? If he is lucky he may catch eight to ten pounds of fish a day. Many days he gets nothing at all. He sells his fish at eight to ten kopeks a pound, and his earnings through the long winter will not average four cents a day. He spends much time in cutting holes into the ice, which is three or four feet thick, then covers the holes up with three or four feet of snow to keep them from freezing solid, and all this labor has to be done before any results are accomplished.

How these people keep up their courage, how they can work for this mere pittance, surpasses our comprehension. Yet they live and probably cling to life with more tenacity than those better off. We receive our information from Mr. Miller, who was born and raised in this country, and it is authentic.

The scenes around us vary but little. On the right bank of the river a low mountain range, on the left bank the so-called meadows of the Volga, which in ordinary seasons furnish the hay for horses and cattle for the country around for miles and miles. This crop last year was an absolute failure. The river did not rise far above its banks in the spring to start the ordinarily luxuriant growth of grass. The summer was particularly dry; no rain for ninety-three days and not enough hay to pay for the cutting. The price of hay and straw during the winter has risen to four and five fold its usual figure. Hay around here costs about \$10 a ton, the poorest straw \$7. Further north hay is sold as high as \$16 a ton—all this the result of the entire failure of the grass crop. The meadows of the Volga can and have produced millions of tons of hay, ample to supply the demand of the contiguous governments and plenty to spare for sale to others.

While we receive all this sad information, there is also some of a little more cheerful character. The season is well advanced, snow has commenced to melt, little streams have formed on the ice, the horses plunge through them without hesitation, and this, perhaps can be done for a week or ten days longer. Our St. Petersburg friends urged us to hurry on to

Samara, so as to be sure of the Volga and also of the country which becomes quite impassable when the warmer days commence and the melting snow (three to four feet average depth) forms torrents in the low lands.

It was rather late in the season, the horses would occasionally stumble and an ominous sound might be heard. I asked Mr. Miller whether the ice was perfectly safe, whereupon he gave me the gratifying answer that "*he thought*" it was, but he added, "My wife had a strange dream last night; she saw all of us disappear in a large hole and it made such an impression upon her mind that I had to promise her I would telegraph our safe arrival at the first station." While I am not superstitious, this tale did not enliven my spirits, down-cast as they were, from the sad stories of want and distress we had heard, and Mr. Miller's further announcement that every season at the break-up drowning accidents happened, that a whole party would sometimes disappear and be carried off by strong currents of the Volga, never to be heard of again, did not reassure me. I must confess that I felt somewhat relieved when, after fifteen miles travel on the ice down the river, our horses set foot on terra firma.



## STARVING RUSSIANS.

A GRAPHIC PEN-PICTURE BY RUDOLPH  
BLANKENBURG.

DISTRIBUTING SOUP AND BREAD TO THE FAMINE SUFFERERS IN  
SAMARA—THE SQUALID HABITATIONS IN WHICH THE PEOPLE  
LIVE.

Correspondence of the *Public Ledger*.

SARATOW, March 28.—The first village we reach is on the left bank of the Volga. There is no soup kitchen in this place so we go on until we reach Kasitzkaya, a village of perhaps 1200 people. Here we are for the first time to witness the dealing out of half a pound of black bread and a plate of thin soup each to perhaps 250 people. We are driven to the home of the Roman Catholic Priest, Pater Bach, who gives us a warm welcome and hurries us off to the kitchen, for it is now nearly noon. The distribution generally takes place at 11 o'clock. To-day however, knowing that we are coming, it has been postponed until our arrival, and we do not want to keep them waiting too long, they have had nothing to eat for 24 hours. The drive through the village we shall never forget. Is it possible that human beings can be housed in such wretched abodes as we see around us? Can nothing be done to ameliorate the fate of those who are flesh as we are? We would not pen cattle in America as human beings are penned here—squalid, low shanties of one story, many with one pane of glass to give light, the roofs covered with straw, when there is any cover at all; a large number have been bared; the straw has been used for fuel or feed for cattle. The houses stand a little back from the street, which is almost a continuous pool of water from the melting snow, breeding disease, and everything is as still as death, no living soul to be seen. The jingling of our bells does not arouse the populace to come

to the doors to see what is transpiring. They have lost all ambition—all life. They go once a day to the soup house to receive their daily ration; then they return home and wait for the next day to come. We see no horses, no cattle; they have been sold in the early winter, when there was no help, when the small sum realized for them was all they had to sustain life, until the cry of distress was heard at home and abroad; until relief, insufficient though it was, came to them at last.

Here is the soup kitchen; will you please descend? We enter an old, dilapidated building. It consists of three divisions (I came near saying rooms); in the first one two women are engaged preparing the soup for the day; in the other two were assembled, closely huddled together, some 200 of the most wretched looking beings a vivid imagination can picture. It would require the pen of a Dickens, a Dumas, a Hugo, to do justice to the scene; even they would fall short of presenting the life we saw. There was the woman with wrinkled face, past three score and ten, holding in her trembling hand the stone jug for her share of the soup; alongside of her a little girl of twelve, with sweet though dirty face, paled by suffering and from want of sufficient nourishment; close by her the mother, holding in her arms the babe of a few months, with its poor, wan cheeks, trying to keep it quiet, the child is evidently hungry. There is the man of stalwart frame, but shrunk to a mere skeleton. There are the boys and girls of all ages, men, women and children, waiting to be fed, their faces pinched and drawn, clothed in rags, a sight to bring tears to the eyes of the most stalwart. We uncover our heads. Who can remain otherwise with such a scene? They receive us with "Praised be the Lord," and fall back into their listless attitude.

After a short pause the distribution commences; the names are called off in rotation; each person on being called presents a ticket and is dished out perhaps a pint of soup, also half a pound of bread. "Thank you," "God bless you," "Praised be the Lord," or similar expressions, are used by all as they leave with the precious morsel in their hands.

They take it home, and many make two, even three pints of soup out of the one received. It will last longer and make two or three meals instead of one. Could you, the generous donors of

these gifts, have witnessed these scenes, you would have surely felt that you never gave money that was more highly appreciated and did more good to its recipients.

After the distribution had been finished we paid a visit to some of the wretched homes in the village and found the interior quite in keeping with the exterior. Then we returned to Pater Bach's house, to find there assembled the village and church elders, who had come to pay their respects and to express thanks for what had been done for their poor neighbors by far-off America. We shook hands all around. The first man tried to and did succeed in kissing our hands, until we begged of them to desist from this practice, as we were unused to it and did not like these tokens of gratitude. The spokesman delivered a short address in his plain and homely manner, more eloquent in its simplicity than an oration by the most finished and fluent orator.

After they had withdrawn Pater Bach invited us to dine with him. Though we had ample refreshments with us we could not decline, and accepted his invitation. Unfortunately, it was fast day, so he could serve no meat, and even the soup was enriched with oil instead of animal substance. This was a novel experience for us. Our opinion afterwards expressed was that the soup could hardly be called palatable. We worried it down, however, with a glass of "vodka," and made quite a meal of bread and fish, food far better than the poor had been served in the soup kitchen. We had quite a distance to traverse before reaching our quarters for the night, and bade our host good-bye. A fresh team of horses awaited us at the door, also quite a congregation of villagers, who stood with heads uncovered, in spite of our remonstrances, until we were out of sight.

The scenes of the first village were repeated as we passed through several others, until we again made a stop at Volskaya, a Lutheran village, and go directly to the house of Pastor Allendorf, where we also meet two ministers from the right bank of the Volga, who have come to pay their respects and through us to thank the donors for the gifts sent them by the Indiana. We visit a few houses. The first one contains two families, consisting in all of fourteen persons. They have moved together to save fuel. The room is clean, the floor well scrubbed, and one can see that these people have known better days. The

grandfather is blind, a man of perhaps 70 years; his son and family, seven in all, and a neighbor with his wife and children make up the rest.

It looks so poor in this place; there is no sign of much deemed absolutely indispensable by even the most needy with us. The children are hardly covered; the grown folks clothed in rags—evidences of most abject poverty. One of the children is sick with fever; it lies listlessly on a wooden bench; its large, sad eyes are turned toward us, wondering what our presence may mean. On inquiring whether they have sent for a doctor, we learn that there is not a physician within fifty versts; that the child has been in that condition for several days, unable to eat anything, for the food they receive is hardly fit for the strongest digestion. This is a sad case. If possible, help should be given. The minister tells us that there is a place where some dainties, like white bread, a little sugar and perhaps a pound of meat, can be had if the money is provided.

On leaving home a friend handed me a ten dollar bill from a good Germantown woman, with the request that I should use it if I found a specially distressing case. Here is this case, this is an opportunity to spend part of the gift, and what happiness it brought to the recipient can only be expressed by the tears that accompanied the thanks of the mother and child. Similar cases can be witnessed on all sides; they are painful in the extreme to us, though those who see them daily get used to them and become rather indifferent.

On our return to the Pastor's residence we are met by a committee of citizens, the Chief Burgess at their head, who hand to us an address of thanks for the sympathy and aid extended to them. This address is in plain, but touching words, and is supplemented by a few remarks from the Pastor. The share of the Indiana's flour for this and five adjoining villages is 2100 poods or about 75,000 pounds. The lists are complete of all those who are to participate in the distribution. A final receipt will tell the story, and there is no danger of any leakage into undeserving or thievish hands. A cordial farewell all around, with the usual scene of bared heads by the quite large concourse of people who have assembled to see us depart, repeated, and then off to the next village, where we are to remain over night. We



pass through several places, all of the same character, until at last, worn out with fatigue and sad at heart from our experiences, our sleigh stops after a journey of perhaps sixty-five miles, and we seek the longed-for rest and sleep.

We remain for the night in Primalnoje, where our friend Miller has an office ; a bed and a sofa serve as our resting places. After a good supper we seek sleep, and soon forget the trials and troubles of the day.

Primalnoje is a Lutheran village of 7000 inhabitants. The church is in charge of Pastor Hoelz, a man in the prime of life, who calls on us early in the morning and from whom we receive much information regarding the famine, its causes and consequences ; enough material for a letter by itself. There are three kitchens in this place. The distress is greater than in many others, as we are soon to ascertain, but the arrangements for help are also more complete than any we have seen yet.

The people here must have known more prosperous times. Many houses are of quite a substantial character. The barns look better and denote thrift, but the last few years, with their constantly recurring failure of crops, have played sad havoc with even the most enterprising and industrious, until to-day the general picture of the place is much like that of the rest, forlorn and wretched. In former years a few stores were found in the place to supply the ordinary demands of every-day life ; now, not a single one ; they all closed, for there is no business, and to-day if you want a pin or needle, a yard of calico or a pound of sugar, you have to wait for an opportunity to send to Saratow for your supplies.

About one-half of the better class of houses are boarded and nailed up ; the tenants have moved together to save fuel ; this adds much to the deserted looks of the place. We also see more houses with straw removed from the tops, it has been used for feed for horses and cattle ; yet one-third of the horses have died from want, and nearly all the balance have been sold for a pitiful sum of money, 5 to 15 roubles a piece. The Pastor goes with us to some of the houses to ascertain for ourselves how the people live in his parish. Among others we visit a man who a few years since was well to do. We find that but two years ago he worked twenty horses ; now he has but three (the size of a

farm here is never given in acres, but always by the number of horses worked, that gives an idea of how large a farm a man has); he is to-day almost destitute, and, though he waited until hunger compelled him, he is one of the beneficiaries of the soup kitchen.

From this place we went to some of the poorer ones. We had about an hour until the kitchen opened and spent the time investigating the condition of affairs. Among the huts we found one even poorer than the rest. We entered and were greeted by a sight we trust we shall never see again. Imagine a room, perhaps ten by twelve feet, not even a board floor, furniture consisting of two bunks bedded with straw, a wooden bench, a dilapidated chair, and this room served as the abode of sixteen people, one family, father, mother and five children, another, father, mother and four children, and a third, a mother and her babe, besides the old grandmother, of probably 80 years of age. Half a dozen children were resting in the bunks, the rest stood around the walls or were seated on the bench. Those in the bunks had little clothing on and all looked so hungry and not a morsel to eat in the house! The women told us that all they had had since noon the day before was a little tea, a concoction they prepare from the root of a prairie plant. This is the only thing they have to take besides their plate of soup and half pound of bread that is served them from the soup house. One of the children, a bright-eyed little girl, looked at us wistfully. I asked her, "Are you hungry, my little girl?" Her lips quivered, her eyes filled with tears, and she whispered, "Yes, I am so hungry!" And we could not help; even the fortune of a Cræsus could buy nothing in this place. Their only dependence was the soup house.

Pastor Hoelz told us upon inquiry that something to eat might be had through the Saratow messenger, so we handed the little girl five roubles to give to her mother, with the remark, "A good American lady sends you this;" her reply, "Bless the American lady," was so sincere and sweet!

Another place we visited was even more wretched. As we entered the father of the family arose with difficulty from a wooden box on which he was seated. He was a man perhaps 35 years of age; his face was pinched and

withered, pale and sallow. Around him were gathered his wife and four children. In the course of conversation I asked him whether he was sick, as he looked so feeble and hardly able to stand up. He said "No; I am not sick; I only feel so weak." The further question, whether he did not receive aid from the soup house, he answered in a trembling voice: "Yes; I do get my share, but there are the children—the children." \* \* \* We understood him; he could not bear to see his little ones suffer. One scanty meal a day did not suffice to keep them from feeling the pangs of hunger. He saved part of his pittance to give to them! It is not needed to describe any more scenes of this character to convey an idea what terrible affliction has come to the people of this country; and, were it not for the hundreds and thousands of kitchens opened in all directions, deaths from starvation would have been of daily occurrence by scores and scores. As it is, there are but few such cases on record, though many have been and are dying from hunger-typhus, which is the direct result of want and starvation.

This village has three kitchens, in which over 1500 people are daily fed, and, as the regular time for distributing the food has arrived, we drive to the first one, which has on its list 526 names. On entering we are received by the singing of a hymn by all those assembled—a hymn of praise and thanks—rendered with so much soul and pathos that it touches us deeply. They all sing, old and young; it is the one way in which they can express their feelings for what has been done for them. After the singing, a short prayer and a few words by the village elder and a short reply, the whole a scene so impressive and touching, so thoroughly arousing the most tender chords of human nature, that there is not a dry eye in the room; even the strangers from the distance are not ashamed of their tears.

The calling off of names begins; they are all present; not one is missing; and as they receive their share of bread and soup a heartfelt "thank you" greets our ears. We tasted the soup and the bread; the latter is black and sour; the soup is not to our liking but a Godsend to the populace. The bill of fare varies but little; bread is the same every day, half a pound to each adult person. The soup is one day made of "Hirse," or millet, in the proportion of twenty-five pounds of Hirse and two



pounds of oil made from sun-flower seed for every hundred persons. The next day twenty-five pounds of meat to every hundred persons. This makes the general variety, occasionally changed by substituting peas or beans for "Hirse" in making the soup. We have been struck, in observing the people, by the fact that we have not seen a smile, even the faintest one, on the face of a single being, whether we met them alone or in crowds. The nearest approach to a smile came from quite a young baby, whose cheeks we stroked. They all look alike. It can, perhaps, be best described by calling the appearance and demeanor of the people as "stolid resignation."

The pictures, so feebly depicted, repeat themselves in the other two kitchens, only with the addition that in one of them, after some remarks by the Pastor, a general shout of "Thank you, thank you," arises from the grateful multitude. On returning to our quarters, Pastor Hoelz states, and we have made the observation ourselves, that more children suffer here for the want of shoes and clothing than in any other district. We have seen many children almost naked, or scarcely covered, so that the request, if in our power, to grant a small sum of money for the purchase of leather and dry goods seems reasonable, and we grant him 250 roubles from the sum left at our disposal. The shoes and clothes are to be made in the village; that will give employment to the home folks and save money besides.

The usual scene of an address of thanks being handed to us and a few remarks from the elders terminate our visit to this place, and on we go to the next one, to find the same scenes, varied, however, with the fact that in this village are about 100 cases of hunger-typhus, scurvy and other diseases, and no physician within 30 miles! We promised the priest 150 roubles to aid those who may recover. How can they live on black bread after a serious illness! Late at night we arrived at Rovnoe, glad to get a rest and deeply impressed with the idea that, much as has been done, much more must be done to save the ill-fated people of the famine districts.



## STARVING RUSSIANS.

ANOTHER INTERESTING LETTER FROM RUDOLPH  
BLANKENBURG.

### IV.

A DESCRIPTION OF LIFE IN SAMARA—A NEGLECT TO USE  
FERTILIZERS ONE CAUSE OF THE FAMINE.

Special Correspondence to the *Public Ledger*.

Moscow, April 1.

It would be a repetition of the scenes described in my last letter to give further details of the journey through these afflicted regions. Suffice it to say that the farther away you go from all railroad communication the worse the condition of the populace seems to become; the villages look more desolate; men, women and children are even more poorly clad; there are fewer cattle and horses; more houses unroofed, nailed up and deserted, and, worst of all, disease and sickness are making their ravages at several points, until one-fourth of the inhabitants of some places are down with hunger-typhus, scurvy and other maladies.

We touch at the last point on our tour of investigation, the village of Krimijar, call on the Pastor, John Jacob Stuber, but unfortunately find him absent in another village, where he has gone to help and comfort the unfortunate. His daughter, a bright young girl of 18, with real Yankee sense, sends at once for the church elders, village officials and the schoolmaster, who make their appearance without delay and unfold to us a tale of woe fully equal to any we have heard.

This seems the proper place for a resumé of one—and, perhaps, the greatest—reason of anxiety for the future, that weighs like a heavy load upon the minds of all we met. Where are they to get seed wheat and seed potatoes? This has been the cry with everyone. The generosity of those who listened to the wails of distress has provided for the present and near future at least enough

to save them from actual starvation. But is this terrible calamity to be repeated next autumn? Are the harrowing scenes of destitution and want again in store for these smitten communities? and all because they cannot get the rye, the wheat, the potatoes to plant, and the crops that are the hope for the future?

Money there is none; the last kopek has been spent long ago. The Government is willing to advance, and does advance, as a loan to be paid in one, two or three years, a small quantity of seed wheat, but only to those who have but a few acres of land. The largest quantity thus granted is perhaps sufficient to sow eight or ten acres, and from this down to two and a half acres. What are the men to do who have farms of 40, 60, 100 or more acres? They get no Government aid whatever; it is supposed they need no help, but they are the ones who should be helped first. They have, by hard work, industry and their habits of economy, succeeded in saving enough to build better houses and barns than their more shiftless neighbors. They had more stock, cattle and horses, and perhaps a little money besides. But for six years there has been a constantly recurring failure of crops, until 1890 came with an unmerciful hand and almost brought them to the brink of ruin. Yet they did not despair; they hoped for better times, for a bountiful harvest. Alas! to be more disappointed than ever, for 1891 fell on them with one swoop of absolute destitution. They did not even get out of the ground what they put in. The harvest (what a misnomer?) brought them from nothing whatever to, perhaps, 10 or 20 pounds of wheat to the acre. If we picture to ourselves their situation we cannot wonder that their faces are full of gloom, their hearts heavy with fear and sorrow; if they sow they have at least hope—if they do not, despair, utter despair is their lot. It has been the one absorbing point of discussion with all of them. They are so grateful for what has been done; their lives and those of the ones dear to them have been saved; the generous contributions of money through Minister Smith and the committee to buy seed for the cattle has done much to raise their sinking spirits, for, though in many provinces a large percentage of the animals have died, they now have enough left to cultivate at least part of their land, and if they can get seed they may hope for a harvest. One bushel of grain now may produce twenty or twenty-five bushels next autumn

and this may be their salvation! No wonder they are so urgent; their words are entreating, yet modest, for they almost feel ashamed to ask for more, where gifts so bountiful have come to them already. If people who live in affluence, who do not know what misery and want are, could have witnessed these entreaties, they would open their hearts and hands, and give freely of their abundance; they would never miss it, and produce unspeakable happiness. These scenes prompted the cablegram that was sent immediately upon our return to Saratow, asking for help to buy seed wheat to save the future. May this message meet the eyes of those who can and will help.

We leave, after a full conference with the elders and others, and visits to several houses, for the next settlement—a Mennonite village, about 13 miles distant. The country here is quite flat; it is the regular Russian “steppe,” or prairie; the ground is covered with snow from three to five feet deep; the post road is quite poor; our horses sink frequently up to their shoulders into the snow, and how they extricate themselves is a mystery to us, but a Russian horse, it seems, can do almost anything.

The severity of this winter is almost unprecedented. Snow commenced to fall the forepart of October and has been continually on the ground all over the Empire, the weather very cold. All this has aggravated the misery and suffering of the poor, for fuel was very scarce, and we hear of instances where half a dozen children have for weeks almost constantly remained closely packed together in a box, covered up with nothing but straw to keep them from freezing.

We arrive at the Mennonite settlement, “Hahnsan,” about 8 o'clock at night, and for the first time on our journey are made to feel that better accommodations await us; that even in this desert of misery a cheering oasis can be found. Mr. Miller's comfortable house, well heated, a good supper afterwards, the usual calls from the dignitaries of the place, and we feel almost at home. There is a striking difference in the appearance, the demeanor, the intelligence of these Mennonites, if we compare them with the class of people we have met within the last few days. They are, in many ways, the counterparts of our own good Quakers at home. They dress plainly but well, their faces are clean shaven, and everything around them denotes thrift and

comfort. But the hard times have affected even these people; the bad harvests are felt this way to such an extent that they must seek assistance. They will not accept of help, as their poorer neighbors do. They are used to helping themselves and not to taking gifts, so one of their number is selected to visit their richer brethren, near the Black Sea, who are asked and gladly grant a loan of 50,000 roubles, to be repaid with interest in the near future. We met the emissary, a Mr. Dick, a man of intelligence and culture, who to our surprise proves to have spent ten years in America, but has been back here for thirty-two years. He and a companion crossed the plains on horseback in 1849, from Council Bluffs to Oregon and thence to California. He has not forgotten his English, and is delighted to have an opportunity of speaking it. He gives us much information about this country, and especially his own sect. The famine has driven many victims from their homes. They naturally congregate where comparative prosperity prevails; thus the Mennonite settlements have their full share of tramps and beggars.

Mr. Dick states that they have two special bakings every week at his house, something like a bushel of wheat being used each time, and that hardly suffices to give a piece of bread each to the hungry wanderers who call. He also relates of a village not far off with 8000 inhabitants in ordinary times; to-day 14,000 people live there, composed of all Eastern nations, tribes and kinds. They are huddled together in every possible shape; many sleep outdoors, seeking the warm side of barns protected from the wind. Mortality is very great among them until they die by scores.

While we are conversing we hear, about 10 o'clock, the jingling of sleigh bells, and are surprised by the entrance of Pastor Stuber and the Chief Burgess of his village, the place we had last visited. On his return, at 6 o'clock, from a pastoral visit about fourteen miles from his home, he learned of our call and at once decided to follow us this distance of eighteen miles, to personally express his thanks for what America, and especially Philadelphia, has done for his flock (they receive some 80,000 pounds of the "Indiana's" flour). This man, perhaps sixty-five years old, braves the cold and weather, late at night,



because his heart is filled with gratitude, to convey personally through us to our friends at home the high appreciation of himself and people for the gifts sent to them. He hands us an address that had been quickly adopted, so full of warm words and noble spirit that it surely will find a welcome when we shall have the pleasure of handing it to the Chairman of the Philadelphia Committee.

Early in the morning we take a look at our surroundings. The size of the farm is 3000 acres; the buildings are large and commodious, everything in capital order, farming utensils carefully put under sheds, horses and cattle well housed; of the former about 100 in an extensive stable, arranged with a view to comfort and saving of time in feeding and cleaning; in short, we almost feel as if by magic we have been transferred to one of our fine Lancaster county farms. A fruit and vegetable garden, fine shade trees—everything conducive to comfort is found. How is it that such a marked difference can exist within a few miles of another settlement? It is principally, as we learn, for the reason that the Mennonites own their land, while in the district at large it is owned by the communities, who rent it for a term of years to the highest bidder, the rent for the whole term of ten or twelve years payable in advance. It rents at from 50 kopeks (25 cents) to perhaps two roubles (\$1.00) a dessjatina (about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres). The renters make it their business to take out of the ground all they can and never to put back anything in the way of fertilizing. This is one of the reasons for the short crops. This practice seems to prevail all over Russia—their fathers and grandfathers did not fertilize why should they, whether they own or rent the land! Unless a change in their mode of cultivation is made the fear is universally expressed that short crops and famine may in the future become the rule, instead of the exception. The soil wherever we have been seems to be of the best quality, 12 to 30 inches of black earth: it looks much like the fertile soil we find in Iowa or Nebraska, but a hundred and more years of absorbing without returning strength has made it unproductive.

The lesson of Russia should be heeded in the United States. They have wantonly destroyed forests here as they do at home, thus greatly modifying the equitable distribution of the rainfall. They have impoverished their lands, lived only for the present—

n short, have shown themselves poor husbandmen. This can be done for a time, but will bear its fruit in the end. You may cut down a forest that has taken a hundred years to grow, in a day, but you cannot grow a new forest in a day; it will take a hundred years or three generations. The Russian Government has taken heed. The law now is that for every forest tree cut down a new one must be planted. Would not such a law prove of immense future benefit to us at home? If agriculture was carried on in Russia with head as well as with hands, this vast Empire would soon be our greatest competitor in the grain marts of the world. Give their peasants education and light, complete a railroad net such as we enjoy, and in a few years Russia would be one of the wealthiest nations of the world.

It now is time to take leave of our friends. We have a sleigh ride of more than sixty miles before us, the snow is melting, the roads have become nearly impassable and there is the Volga, with her treacherous crust of ice, all these between us and the first step home towards the setting sun. Our sleigh is ready, three strong horses impatient for their task, and off we are. We passed through the village, saw more fine farms, a Mennonite meeting house, very much like our Friends' meeting house in Philadelphia, and soon the "steppe," or prairie, was reached.

Our friend fortunately had, the previous night, sent a relay of horses to the half-way house, called "the cutter," or we would surely have been forced to spend the night on the prairie, for our horses could barely pull us through the deep snow. They were completely exhausted after 28 miles of travel. By this time we were quite hungry. A light breakfast, early in the morning, made us feel by noon that the contents of our basket would be fully appreciated; so, while the horses were being changed, we opened it—to find it empty!

The girl who had the previous night served us with cheese, part of our commissariat, emptied the basket, and in the morning forgot to replace that which was to serve us during the following day. We looked aghast, for it was impossible to buy even a half pound of black bread. We were far from any village, and had to go hungry until after one of the worst drives imaginable we arrived at 7 at night in Saratow. Thus ended a trip which will ever be memorable with us in the famine districts of Samara.

## AN EVENING WITH TOLSTOI.

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RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE RUSSIAN COUNT.

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### ONE OF GOD'S NOBLEEAN.

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THE GREAT WORK DONE TO RELIEVE THE FAMINE STRICKEN PEOPLE BY THE TOLSTOI FAMILY.—THE COUNT'S MINGLING WITH THE PEASANTS AS A FRIEND HAS BROUGHT UPON HIM THE SCORN AND CONTEMPT OF THE RUSSIAN ARISTOCRACY.—THE FAMINE, ITS CAUSES AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA.

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From a Correspondent of *The Times*.

Moscow, April 3.

Few Europeans, certainly no Russian is as well and widely known in the United States as Count Tolstōi, or to give his name in full, "Count Leof Nicolaivitch Tolstōi." As a philanthropist and humanitarian, his fame at home is as extended as the limited sphere of communication and the still more limited sphere of "imparting undisguised news and knowledge within the borders of the empire" will permit. Abroad his fame has, especially since his zealous, unremitting and self-sacrificing labors on behalf of the destitute, starving peasants in his country, raised him to the foremost rank among the benefactors of mankind. As writer and author he has charmed and instructed the world not only through the beauty of his style, the fascinating yet instructive simplicity of his narrative, but also through the boldness of his thought, his deep insight into human nature and the absolute fearlessness of telling the plain unvarnished truth as he sees the truth.

Probably nothing could show more beautifully the faith in and the admiration for this remarkable man than the zeal with

which large sums of money have been collected at home and abroad to be sent to and distributed by Count Tolstoi among the famine sufferers. We read in papers of all countries how committees have been formed, sums of money, large and small, subscribed for the Tolstoi fund; they know that this fund will reach Count Tolstoi, and having reached him there is no doubt of its ultimate disposition for the alleviation of the needy and stricken.

It was our intention to first visit the famine districts east of the Volga, especially in the government of Samara, to return westward through the governments of Tula and Rjasan, where Count Tolstoi's estates are situated, then pay him a visit, and thus to ascertain for ourselves the methods he was employing and the extent of his operations in his great work of charity. Unfortunately, on our return from Samara the weather had moderated, the snow was melting so rapidly that the country roads became almost impassable; for nearly four weeks every spring all means of communication in the country in the interior of Russia are cut off, the water stands from five to six feet high in the gullies, horses sink to their shoulders in the mud, and traveling by carriage is practically out of the question.

Our lack of knowledge of the Russian language also made the journey quite difficult. The uncertainty of finding Count Tolstoi, who was constantly going from village to village on his errands of mercy, prompted us to telegraph to his estate, "Rieosky," to ascertain where we would be likely to find him, and to our joy we received reply from one of his superintendents, "Count in Moscow for several days." We immediately set the telegraph in motion again, to Moscow, and had the great satisfaction to receive a reply at once, "Am in Moscow for ten days; shall be glad to see you."

Eight car loads of the Indiana's flour had been sent to Count Tolstoi. He had read the story of her arrival and reception at Libau. He knew of Philadelphia and we felt pretty sure that we would not be intruding upon him by our visit. Besides this we had a warm letter of introduction to him from our Minister, Charles Emory Smith, who had at the same time made us the bearers of quite a large sum of money, 7,000 roubles, contributions from the New York Chamber of Commerce, the Cleveland, Ohio, committee and the Mennonites of the West for



the "Tolstoï fund." On apprising him of our arrival we received a cordial note inviting us to his house "any evening after 7 o'clock" and, as the first evening seemed the best, we selected it for our visit. Moscow, the ancient capital of Russia, is like Washington, the modern capital of the great republic, a city of magnificent distances. It took us nearly a half hour's drive from our hotel to reach Count Tolstoï's house.

After taking off our overcoats and leaving them in the hall (it is considered quite impolite, almost rude in Russia to ever appear, even in the ante-room, with your overcoat on), we were ushered into the drawing room, and most charmingly and warmly greeted by Mrs. Tolstoï. Her appearance is quite prepossessing, her manners are the perfection of ease and grace, and if ever any one succeeded in making strangers feel at home in a strange house, she did. She speaks English quite fluently, and after introducing us to her brother and several other persons, bade us be seated. The conversation became quite animated at once, to be interrupted in a few minutes by the entrance of Count Tolstoï.

Have you ever seen a count—a real live, genuine count? If not, how do you picture to yourself a man of this rank in the world of aristocracy? Do you not imagine a person of haughty, stern demeanor, dressed in faultless attire, decorated with orders and bearing a look that awes the ordinary mortal with its expression, "I am the descendant of a long line of ancestors, who are you?" Here is Count Tolstoï! He enters with quick, elastic step, grasps us cordially by the hand and bids us welcome to his house; you see a man of 60 to 65; erect of bearing, of good height and well-built; a full beard, showing the traces of time; large, fine forehead, the seat of so many good thoughts, and such eyes! The eyes are said to be the mirror of the soul; if this expression had not been previously made, how much in place its origin would be here, when you look into the eyes of this man! Keen, penetrating, observant, benevolent, kind, affectionate, determined, firm and brave—read his works, know his deeds, and you will read his eyes!

He was dressed in a loose-fitting blouse of a grayish color reaching almost to his knees and fastened around his waist by

a belt of the same material, about as plain a dress as man could wear, and it looked so comfortable!

By this time other members of the family appeared, first a beautiful little boy of five, who, when we asked him whether he spoke English, said: "Yes, I speak English." On expressing our surprise we learn that all the children, six boys and three girls, ranging in age from 29 to 5 years, have been taught and are taught from early childhood besides the Russian language also French, German and English. It is so easy for children to learn a language; it is like playing, and does not tax them so much as when they have to learn the rudiments from the books. Then we are introduced to one of the daughters—a young lady, perhaps 20 years of age. After introducing her the mother turns to me and says: "She looks so poorly. Her cheeks used to be quite rosy, she has just come from the country for a few days' rest. She has been away all winter establishing and superintending soup houses; she and her sister were in bed several days. I felt quite uneasy about them, but she now is able to be up, and I hope her sister will also be about in a few days." What a brave young woman she is! The whole world of ease, fashion and luxury is open to her; she has rank and position; is highly educated and gifted, yet she prefers the wearisome paths of duty to the fascinating charms of pleasure and society. We met others of the children, all fine-looking and with the natural self-possession that comes of parents making their children their equals as far as they can. One of the sons, a young man of 22, a student at the Moscow University, is in the interior of the province of Samara and has been there for some time looking after the unfortunate sufferers of that district. The great work done by the Tolstói family during the present crisis is so well known that it is needless to recur further to it here. Is it not sufficient to state that they have established and are maintaining one hundred and seventy-six soup houses?

Little groups have formed by this time. The Tolstoïs kept open house; their friends come and go; you hear Russian, French, German and English spoken at the same time. The topics touched are of general interest. All is animation. But here is a chance for a quiet conversation. Let us improve it and ascertain the truth or falsity of the report spread over the world

some two months ago that Count Tolstoi had been arrested by order of the Emperor, that he had been banished to his estates, had been imprisoned, or even transported to Siberia! Furious editorials appeared in several of the most widely read journals of Europe denouncing in unmeasured terms this fresh outrage of the autocrat of Russia. And what are the facts? Count Tolstoi wrote an article for one of the leading papers of Europe in which he gave unstinted praise to the Emperor for the great interest he was taking for the relief of his stricken subjects, for the generosity he had displayed in granting large sums of money from his private purse to alleviate their sufferings. In this article he also spoke of the general effort made by the government and those connected with it to do their duty, but added at the same time words to the effect that the peasants themselves must "rise to the occasion and learn how to better their own condition." Could more wholesome advice have been given even by the most perfect of men?

But no, advice of this kind may tend to open the eyes of the poor ignorant people who have lived in darkness for so many years, and that might endanger the position of those whose power is based upon the ignorance of the masses. A few days after the appearance of this article a pamphlet is mysteriously distributed during the night over the whole city of Moscow, in which Count Tolstoi's language to the peasants to rise to the occasion is perverted into "*a call to arise*," and beneath this an appeal is made that would startle even those who are anything but friendly to the existing condition of affairs. That was an opportunity the enemies of Count Tolstoi were not slow to embrace. He, like many others who unselfishly strive to do their duty, has made enemies of those whose paths he crosses. They know nothing but their own selfish interests. He sets self aside and works for the good of the masses; therefore he is their enemy. He is charged with inciting the masses to riot and insurrection, a crime that calls for immediate action and imprisonment, but the Emperor refuses to sanction the arrest. He knows Count Tolstoi and what he has done for suffering humanity during the winter. He knows that Count Tolstoi is a non-resistant, or peace man, from principle; that he would never advocate measures of violence and force, but resort at all times to that permanently



more effective weapon—moral suasion. Count Tolstoi was not arrested, nor was he banished. The story must have originated in the wild brains of a sensationalist, but as the world at large almost always prefers to believe evil rather than good, the story was believed and spread like wild-fire. No one could speak more highly and with greater admiration of the Emperor Alexander III. than Mrs. Tolstoi. She sees in him a man of the best impulses, of warm heart and noble character, who is striving to do the best for his people and this opinion is shared by nearly all those I have met in Russia. It is sad to think in this connection that a ruler like the Emperor rarely gets credit for the good he does. Everything bad and wicked that happens under his rule, even if he has no knowledge whatever and is quite innocent of it, is charged to his account, while the good and reputable acts are credited to the account of his advisers. It has always been and probably always will be so.

After an hour's general conversation we were invited to take a glass of tea (coffee and tea in Russia are invariably served in glasses), and such tea as one finds only in Russia! Most of the callers had by this time departed, thus we had the pleasure of a quiet and delightful conversation with the family on topics that seemed to be of interest to all who participated. Count Tolstoi sat opposite to us, showing to the best advantage his strong, intellectual and benevolent countenance. His conversation turned on America, and he displayed a surprising knowledge of our country, its men and measures. The first inquiry he made was about the state of health of the good old poet, as he called him, Walt Whitman. We had not then heard of his death, but knew of his hopeless condition. Had I ever met or seen him? Yes, not quite two years ago I had the pleasure of meeting and listening to him at the Contemporary Club, where in his feeble condition he was carried, dressed in his wrapper, and where he delighted the audience with a talk about Abraham Lincoln.

This was Walt Whitman's last appearance in public, his life was slowly ebbing away, and while we were talking about him, while Count Tolstoi spoke beautifully of his works, the good old poet lay dead at his humble cottage in Camden. Next he spoke of William Penn, whom he considers one of the greatest and best men that ever lived, with his gospel of peace and good will



to man. Then the conversation turned to Henry George and his single tax system ; did we believe in him and his theories ? We openly confessed that Henry George's ideal seemed rather obscure to us, impracticable and visionary, that he was making slow progress at home, and while everybody conceded his earnestness of purpose, the vast majority of our people had not been convinced that their burdens would be lightened or their condition improved by the adoption of the single tax system. Count Tolstoi did not subscribe to our opinion, and while he hardly committed himself to Henry George, one could see that he was deeply impressed with his ideal and had carefully weighed in his mind the " pros and cons " of the new gospel of taxation. He had, indeed, talked about it and discussed it with a number of the more intelligent peasants of his neighborhood, and stated that many of them were quite interested in the question and looked at it favorably. But as this subject, like that of the tariff, leads to interminable debate it was dropped to make place for one of even greater import, that of land ownership, with particular reference to alien land ownership. Here we quite agreed. Count Tolstoi is a firm believer in the theory that the land should be owned by actual settlers, and that one of the greatest evils which threatens, especially America, is the ownership of vast tracts of land by alien syndicates, corporations or individuals. He thought that our people could not legislate too quickly to avert or remedy this danger to the future of our country and was very much pleased when told that several States, notably Illinois, had passed laws checking this evil. It is remarkable how well posted this man is about American affairs. He knows all about current events, literature, our prominent men, and reads many of our best periodicals.

In speaking of the famine, its causes and effects on the future of Russia, the underlying thought was that the ignorance of the people is one of its main sources, and as long as the Russian peasants are either unwilling to learn, or are not permitted to adopt a sounder policy of cultivation and agriculture the danger of a recurrence of famine will exist. Count Tolstoi's open advocacy, we have been told outside of his household, of educating the masses has made him the deadly enemy of the Church ; his mingling with the peasants as a friend and teacher has drawn

upon him the scorn and contempt of the powerful Russian aristocracy, who, with rare exceptions, believe that an ignorant peasant is much more tractable than an educated one.

The climax of aristocratic indignation came when Count Tolstoi, on his visits of charity and consolation to the distressed and hungry, appeared clad in the garb of a lowly person instead of in velvet and broadcloth, seated in a fine carriage with a retinue of servants to distribute his gifts; when he, rather than show himself their superior, met the poor as one who was fully alive to the fact that they had affections, sorrows and desires the same as people far above them in life. This is one of the reasons why the poor worship him, while those who will not allow themselves to know that there are poor, nurse their unkindly feelings against him until they almost hate him.

Then he wants to know the origin of the Philadelphia movement for the relief of people six thousand miles away and seems so interested when told of the Philadelphia permanent relief committee, organized some ten years ago, always ready to stretch forth a helping hand when help is needed at home or abroad.

The story of the special Russian famine relief committee, the deep interest taken in its work, the quick reply to the request for subscriptions from all classes, from the rich and the poor—this tale does not seem to weary any of the listeners. And when they hear of the dispatch with which the work is done they exclaim: "That can only be done in America"! They are told of the telegraphic order from Philadelphia to the Washburne Mills in Minneapolis at 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon "for five thousand barrels of flour;" how this flour is ground in six hours; how two special trains, gaily decorated, each of fifteen cars, leave Minneapolis at 3 o'clock Saturday afternoon; how they reach Chicago at 7.06 P. M. on Sunday and leave that city as one special train at 7.30 for Philadelphia, reaching the City of Brotherly Love on special time by Tuesday night or Wednesday morning, traversing a distance of some 1,300 miles or about 2,000 versts! And how eager all are to do their share. The railroad company north of Chicago ships the special trains free of charge, the Pennsylvania Railroad does the same, 700 tons of coal are contributed to send the "Indiana" on her mission of mercy, Wilkesbarre lumber merchants contribute 20,000 feet of

lumber for dunnage, provisions for the crew of the "Indiana" are contributed free, the oldest pilot of Philadelphia asks the privilege of taking her down the Delaware, and the "Indiana" herself was placed at the disposal of the committee free of any charge except the actual expenses of the crew by the generous steamship company. And then the "Indiana" is an American-built ship, she floats the "Stars and Stripes," and she had such a hearty welcome from America's friend in the dark days of the war.

Our tale seemed to deeply touch our hearers. Philadelphia, the city of William Penn, will have a warmer place than ever in the hearts of those friends, and while they enthusiastically speak of the great work done not only by our people, but also by those of other American cities and communities, we think the proper time has arrived for us to broach the subject of a visit to America by Count Tolstoi. We assure him that there are few, if any, foreigners who would be accorded a more hearty and sincere reception than himself. He seems pleased, but shakes his head, thinks he is too old, yet would like to visit our country, and we hope the day may come when we shall welcome him in America.

It was getting rather late by this time, so we prepared to withdraw. Count Tolstoi offered to escort us the next afternoon to visit some of the principal points of interest in Moscow, but much as we would have liked his company, we assured him that we must take the good-will for the deed, as we were perfectly aware of the fact that he was a very busy man, and had to attend to much of the large amount of work that had accumulated during his long absence in the country. He then asked his charming daughter to write for him the receipts for the money we had brought, ready for him to sign.

She requested me to give her a formula to use, which I did in the shape of a formal acknowledgment of the certain sum of money from the certain committee at the hands of our Minister, Charles Emory Smith, not deeming it my province to add special words of thanks. When he read these acknowledgements he made a sign of disapproval, and said, "That seems so cold," so he added, with his own hand, "with heartfelt gratitude to the generous donors." These receipts should find a safe and per-

manent place when they reach their destination. The hand that partly wrote them and signed them is the hand of one of God's noblemen.

We had to leave, and I shall never forget Count Tolstōi's parting words. He took my hand in both of his, looked me in the eyes, and said: "One of the saddest things in life is that we meet people, learn to like them, and then have to part from them —perhaps never to see them again!"

And so it is!



April, 27, 1892.

It is not the purpose of these letters to present a descriptive account of the places and objects of interest an every-day traveller may observe. Guide books will give the reader a more correct and complete picture of fine buildings, churches, monuments and art galleries than a casual observer could do. The letters are written with a view of presenting in their different bearings the phases of this, one of the gravest calamities that has ever befallen any country. The famine data have been carefully gathered from competent and authoritative sources, as well as from personal observation in the famine districts, they may, therefore, be submitted to the donors of the Relief Fund as fairly representing the actual state of affairs.

It would be impossible to give a true picture without bringing into the story some apparently extraneous matters and conclusions. They represent the unbiased judgment of one who desires to throw some light on a dark and depressing subject. The preceding letter, "An Evening With Tolstoi," represents this phase, also the mild but just strictures on the Russian Church, and its attitude toward the temporal and moral welfare of the peasants. The reader may see for himself how much good a single family can accomplish, what a power for the elevation of the lowly can be exerted by a few individuals whose hearts are filled with a noble sympathizing spirit, and who give not only of their substance, but also of themselves! The example of the Tolstois has been emulated to some extent by others of equal rank. If the best Russian society would continue the work so well begun under the stress of the famine, if they would interest themselves in the moral as well as the physical welfare of the peasantry, intelligence might soon take the place of ignorance, comparative wealth that of squalor and want, hope that of despair, happiness that of misery. Nor would the peasants be the sole beneficiaries; their elevation would redound to the inestimable benefit of the higher and highest classes, and of the whole Russian Empire.

After a few days' sojourn at Moscow, we returned to St Petersburg, to finish our work and prepare for the homeward journey.

How glad the hearts of our Russian friends were made when, shortly after our return to the Russian capital, a reply to the following cable message sent from Saratow to the Hon. Edwin S. Stuart, Mayor and Chairman, Philadelphia :

"Just returned from four days' sleigh journey through Samara—scenes heart-rending. People barely kept from starving through half pound black bread and dish of thin soup daily. Hunger-typhus in many places. It defies description. Peasants implore for Russian seed wheat, to prevent recurrence of famine. Do help. Twenty thousand dollars now will bring untold happiness. Answer what you will do, care Minister Smith. Cable him money you can spare,"

was received, authorizing us to use the balance of our letter of credit, amounting to about \$10,000, for the purchase of seed wheat. The money was placed in Minister Smith's hands, and distributed so as to reach those who seemed most deserving of help. If the season favors the tillers of the soil who received this aid, the ten thousand dollars may yield twentyfold, and will bring thousandfold blessings to those who contributed their mite to the fund.

It is gratifying to contemplate what America has done. The Indiana and Conemaugh, sailing under the "Stars and Stripes," with their enormous cargoes of flour and provisions and thirty thousand dollars in cash, distributed through the Russian Famine Relief Committee of Philadelphia! The Missouri, with the Western millers' contribution! The full cargo sent out by the Red Cross Society! The large amounts of money contributed in other parts of the country!

One may well be proud to be a citizen of such a country!

